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### **INVESTING IN PEOPLE**

(Education)



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#### **Uncovering assets: Helping OSCYs wield their strengths**

How fare the youth in Mindanao? Are they growing up as responsible adolescents? Are they making healthy choices? Are they potential leaders of their communities? It would be interesting to get a glimpse of the youths' plight along these lines. To this day, however, there has been no known profiling of Mindanao youth based on personal assets. But very soon, this gap shall be filled — at least.

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Last January 10 to 12 (Sarangani Province) and 15 to 17 (Zamboanga City), DepED administrators from Region 9, 12 and ARMM attended the DAP workshop together with project implementers of EQuALLS OSCY programs in Mindanao.

#### **Uncovering....**

for the out-of-school youth (OSCY) sector in Region 9, 12 and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

Thanks to Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills (EQuALLS), an education project from the US Agency for International Development (USAID), kids who have dropped out of school and are now engaged in EQuALLS' basic literacy and livelihood skills trainings will undergo a survey so as to get their profile.

The new profiling tool, Developmental Assets Profile (DAP), surveys children ages 11 to 18 years based on 40 developmental assets — personal experiences and qualities that they need to become responsible members of the society. Children respond to a test instrument which will reveal how much of these assets they possess.

Earlier this month, DAP was introduced to EQuALLS implementing partners and Department of Education (DepED) administrators from the Bureau of Alternative Learning System. It gained positive reac-

tions from the DepED administrators in Region 9, 12 and ARMM who work closely with EQuALLS in the implementation of its Alternative Learning System (ALS) programs.

They tried the survey at youth centers, among these the Social Development Center in Zamboanga City. What came out was a learner-centered profile of the youth conveying mostly the difficult growing up experiences of OSCYs.

One of the administrators, Ms. Emie Kiblatin, Division ALS Supervisor of Sulu 2 in ARMM, was deeply touched when a child respondent sought an explanation of "family" when the word cropped up in the survey.

"I have no difficulty with DAP as a tool. But it can be difficult for this learner who has to answer questions about her family when she herself doesn't know what a family is. She doesn't know what a house is because for her the house is the Social Development Center," she said.

"The DAP tool can also be an instrument to foster a closer relationship among Instructional Managers (IMs) and their learners," Ms. Emie Kiblatin added.

IMs are supervisors of ALS classes at EQuALLS community learning centers. With information on the learners' abilities and personal assets, they will be in a much better position to help the learners achieve their goals — such as passing the government's Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) test.

OSCYs undergo intensive basic literacy training in preparation for this test. The goal is to help them re-enter formal schools, since A&E passers will get a certification comparable to a diploma of an elementary or high school graduate. But the latest figures from DepED showed only 24% of 51,979 succeeded in the last A&E test.

Understanding the youth based on their strongest positive assets and building on these could be the key that will transform them from drop outs to achievers.

The DAP tool is only one

of the many tested approaches USAID-EQuALLS has introduced for the development of the youth in Mindanao's most volatile regions. EQuALLS aims to uplift the lives of 100,000 more OSCYs through various literacy and livelihood skills trainings until 2011. — EQuALLS PR